C.A.78-0322: Withhold by dirty tricks, in part and in toto HW 7/18/78

In my initial review of the records that reached me 6/28/78, a review to indicate which pages I wanted copied for other uses, my attention was taken by two that refer to Dallas Motorcycle Policeman James A. Chaney. From Dallas files 89-43 these are Serials 9614 and, in reverse chronological order, 9570.

My interest in Chaney dates to 1964. Two are incorporated in Whitewash, completed 2/15/65. On reading these two Dallas records my interest was further attracted by a gross and deliberate lie - that Chaney had never been interviewed. Couched, however, to make a different interpretation possible.

In this I also address possible motive in the sudden burst of withholding of the names of SAs after more than half the Dallas file was processed without excisions of SA names.

The name obliterated from 9614, I'm certain, is Charles T. Brown, Jr. Brown is one of the SAs who worked on the JFK investigation.

The lie is on p. 2 of 9614. It is that "Dallas indices and references from Dallas indices regarding the assassination fail to indicate that CHANEY was interviewed by Agents of this Bureau following the assassination."

At the bottom of the first page Brown quotes Lt. Jack Revill as saying "Chaney told REVILL that he had never been interviewed by anyone following the assassination to obtain his observations as a witness." "The addition of "to obtain his observations as a witness," referring to the assassination, is important. I doubt it is Chaney's exact language because he WAS interviewed to OBTAIN HIS OBSERVATIONS AS A WITNESS * BUT to an entirely different observation (Caps from ribbon fault, not emphasis intended.)

On 12/28/63 Chaney was interviewed by SA Raymond H. Lester, whose report is page 682 of one of the earliest consolidated reports, I think the very first, CD 4. Although Chaney was one of the outriding DPD motorcycle escorts he is the ONLY one not used as a Commission witness and about whom I could never find any FBI report. Now these were the closest of eyewitnesses. The others were called. In addition, as I state in Whitewash, in the opinion of Officer Studebaker, Chaney had done some work that appeared to have significance. Studebaker's lead was never followed.

From Lester's report all he asked Chaney about is having seen Jack Ruby the day after JFK was killed and the day before Ruby killed Oswald.

Now the FBI was so exhaustive it conducted special hair examinations to prove that the hair (public) on the blanket that was without any question Oswald's blanket was in fact Oswald's hair. So I found two such oversights to be two too many and I was always interested in Chaney.

The first time I had a chance to look into the Chaney matter was when I was in Dallas in December 1971. The first sentence of that memo is accurate and pertinent, "...failure to call Chaney as a witness is cleared up by a tape of his initial comment on what he saw: a bullet hit JFK in the face. He could be wrong," this continues, or could have misspoken himself. I tried to locate the tapes. The station's news editor is dead, others have no knowledge, and the owner's secretary, Gordon McClendon, said he also had no knowledge of their present whereabouts or existence. But he had made a record in which part of the Chaney interview was included. He sent it to me and this is what Chaney did say. It was unwanted testimony, as it would have been if he had corrected it in any way.

Both of the cited Dallas records were in headquarters. If the FBI is now telling the truth neither was released in the 12/77 and 1/78 releases. I think the reason is obvious: all Washington reporters would have known that the self-serving explanations worked into them are not valid - that the Commission did not call Chaney. The FBI was in charge prior to the appointment of the Commission and it was the Commission's major investigative arm.

The next day, referring to this memo, Assistant Director Harold N. Bassett wrote SAC Dallas directing that Chaney be interviewed immediately. If this was done it is not included in these Dallas records. If it is in the HQ releases there is no possible way of locating it.

FBIHQ also ordered a review of other cases of police not being interviewed. He directed be given "promptly" to the General Investigative Division, whose files the FBI steadfastly refuses to search - in any and all cases. No relevant record has been provided by Dallas and again there is no way of knowing if it exists in the almost 100,000 pages of FBIHQ releases.

The Brown memo to SAC includes a quotation from former Dallas police chief Curry that is consistent with what Chaney said, that "two men were involved in the shooting" of JFK. It included expressions of sympathy for Special Agent/Jim Hosty and his present publicity..." The refers to the note from Lee Harvey Oswald he destroyed. An extensive FBI investigation was conducted. All Dallas FBI employees provided statements. There is virtually no reflection of this in the files just provided. If they are in the HQ releases there is no way of finding them.

It will not be possible to go into all withholdings or to prepare memos on them all. I have done it in this case in part because of my immediate and continuing interest and because motive for withholding outside the exemptions of the Act can be perceived. It was the FBI's job to interview Chaney as a Presidential escort immediately. It didn't. It interviewed him about a minor matter related to Ruby and more recently it misrepresented that no interview report is reflected in the Dallas indices.